



Accessibility Advisory Committee

600 Fifth Street NW
Washington, DC 20001
202-962-6060

November 2, 2020

Dear Chair Smedberg, and Members of the Board,

It is my pleasure to present you with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) report for the month of October 2020. The primary issues we reviewed were: 1) WMATA Budget Update, 2) Rail Car Sanitizing and Cleaning, and 3) MetroAccess Sedans.

Issues of the Month

WMATA Budget Update:

Paul Smedberg, Board Chair, WMATA, participated in the meeting and provided an overview of the Budget and how it is being adversely impacted by the Pandemic and the lack of a second Federal aid package. Board Chair Smedberg stated the fiscal year 2021 (FY 21) budget from December 2020 or January 2021 through June is impacted due to COVID-19. He discussed the proposal to amend the FY 21 budget, as Metro is in a dire financial situation. Board Chair Smedberg stated Metrorail and Metrobus ridership has decreased tremendously and the CARES Act funds will be exhausted in December 2020. Without a CARES Act II in place, the WMATA Board is working with the General Manager to balance the partial FY 21 budget. The budget shortfall is \$212 million and to balance it, Metrorail and Metrobus service cuts, various sources including jurisdictions, customers, and fares, all are being reviewed.

Board Chair Smedberg also informed that all capital projects with grants are secured and that this will prevent WMATA from slipping into a deteriorated condition that previously existed. He stated the virtual budget public hearing is on October 13, at 3 pm. The AAC understands that these are very tough decisions for WMATA and hopes that the Congress will have a provision of \$32 billion funding to be distributed as per the formula, which would change the current financial impacts. The Committee understands the funds to be received cannot be assumed until realized, therefore the decisions have to be made to move forward with the least negative impact. It was an informative session with WMATA Board Chair Smedberg, and the AAC appreciates his willingness to share information and to receive the Committee's feedback on the issues, both financial and problems with communication to the public concerning the virtual hearings. The low number of participants at the hearing was disappointing considering the potential impact to customers of items on the Docket.

Rail-Car Sanitizing and Cleaning:

Brand Loney, Director, Department of Rail Car Maintenance, provided information about the rail car sanitizing and cleaning process during the time of the current pandemic. Mr. Loney stated since the COVID began, they have significantly increased the cleaning. They have contract cleaners stationed at the end of the line to pick up trash/debris and do spot disinfection. This is done during the day as trains arrive at the end of the lines before turning back for service. At the end of the day, all the rail cars are cleaned and disinfected with an electric disinfectant spray.

During the meeting, a member the public commended Mr. Loney and his team as being unsung heroes. The AAC and the members of the public appreciate the abundance of surface cleaning that is being done. The Committee asked about the filtration system as that is an important component for the current situation. Mr. Loney informed that 65% of the air is recycled, a full replacement of air takes place every 3 minutes and 6 seconds, and the recycled air is replaced

19 times an hour. Mr. Loney also informed that they are proactively reviewing options for various germicidal products as it uses ultra violet rays to kill the germs.

The AAC appreciated all the information that was shared and hopes for WMATA ridership to increase with time, as the customers feel comfortable and safe riding Metro again. There was a discussion of the delayed implementation of hand sanitizer by WMATA as well as the need for further implementation of mechanisms for protection against air borne transmission of COVID.

MetroAccess Sedans:

Christiaan Blake, Managing Director, Access Services, stated the first two of the 177 MetroAccess sedans have been delivered. Once all of the vehicles arrive, the sedans will be approximately 30% of the fleet. This solicitation criteria was developed with the help of the feedback received from the AAC and the disability community at-large. The criteria included the leg-room (front and rear), the head-room (front and rear), and vehicle access. The primary interest in a hybrid vehicle was due to very good fuel efficiency in its mileage. The AAC was told that a competitive solicitation resulted in the Toyota Camry Hybrid. Unfortunately, these vehicles appear to have been purchased while ignoring the advice of the AAC and ADAP as well as their own RFP requirements listed on pages 81-84 of the RFP: “(a) Exterior sedans color must be “White”; (b) Sedans must have a fuel rating of at least 46 MPG in city driving; (c) Sedans must have at least 90-degree door opening angle for easy entry and exit”.

This last critical item was ignored in awarding the contract to Toyota. The 90degree door opening is essential for wheelchair patrons to transfer to the vehicle. It is also important for large, mobility challenge individuals to be able to have access. This item was requested by the AAC and ADAP based upon experience and lessons learned from previous purchases which were not accessible to certain members of the disability community. It is tragic that a large segment of the MetroAccess customer base will not be able to use these sedans. It is important to learn why the final procurement appears to have ignored the expert advice and best practices provided through the AAC.

Mr. Blake informed the Committee that the two already procured sedans will be used for customer trips until January 2021 to receive comments from customers and the operators. The feedback received from the trips taken thus far, has been only partially positive due to the less than 90 degree door opening of the Camry. Mr. Blake added that in the future, customers will be encouraged to express their vehicle preference when booking trips since many will be unable to transfer from mobility devices to the Camry. The AAC looks forward to having the allotted number of Toyota Camrys within the MetroAccess fleet but would have preferred that a more disability friendly vehicle that met the standards in the RFP had been chosen.

Sincerely,

Philip Posner
Chair